

This book has been designed in a Victory Format. Smaller type and margins produce fewer pages which permit a vital saving of paper and labor in the manufacture of a wartime book.

TRIUMPH of TREASON

“Contre nous de la tyrannie...”

by

PIERRE COT



CHICAGO • NEW YORK

Introduction

THIS BOOK IS WRITTEN on behalf of those whom the Vichy government attempted to try at the Riom Court. It is more especially written on behalf of my friends, Léon Blum and Édouard Daladier.

These men have been silenced by the Vichy government. No one knows exactly what has happened to them since April, 1942. They were arrested in the summer of 1940 and charged with responsibility for the French defeat. Not until February, 1942, were they brought before the Supreme Court of Justice at Riom. After six weeks of public hearings, a law was enacted by the government to impose on the Court the adjournment *sine die* of the trial. The edict proclaimed that supplementary information was necessary to expose more fully the defendants' "breaches in the fulfillment of their governmental offices." It was mere pretext, for new information was never sought. Instead, the Vichy government sent the accused from Riom to the other end of the country, to Portalet, an ancient fortress, lost in the heart of the Pyrenees, in a snowbound valley, a day's trip from any center of communication.

In December, 1942, Hitler's jailers replaced Pétain's. In 1943 unconfirmed rumors spread that Blum and Daladier had been transferred to Germany. Even if these rumors were untrue, Pétain's most dangerous adversaries were cut off from the rest of the world.

They have been buried alive in a new Bastille, worse than the one destroyed on July 14, 1789, with only two ways of exit open to them—death, or liberation by the French people after the defeat of Fascism in Europe.

Why did the Vichy government halt the trial in this manner? Because, even before a court controlled by dictatorship, accused persons have been allowed to present their defense and to speak—and Pétain and Laval were afraid of Blum's and Daladier's revelations.

Until the eve of the Riom trial, Pétain felt perfectly safe. All precautions had been taken to assure the condemnation of the men allegedly responsible for the French defeat—Blum, Daladier, and their "accomplices." The judicial travesty had been prepared and planned carefully. For a year and a half, clever propaganda had been carried on throughout France and the world, calumniating the defendants and the republican regime they represented. This propaganda had borne excellent fruit, principally outside France, for many democratic governments, imitating Pontius Pilate, affected to strike a balance

between the accusers—adversaries of political freedom and “collaborators” of Nazi Germany, and their victims—champions of democracy and anti-Fascists. An exceptional Court, composed of judges appointed because of their political bias and devotion to Pétain’s regime, was created. Finally, in October, 1941, interfering with the march of “justice,” Marshall Pétain sentenced the defendants, in advance of trial, to life imprisonment, thus depriving the Court of what little freedom of consideration and judgment it possessed.

In spite of these precautions, the Riom trial turned against the Vichy government. Marshal Pétain, General Weygand, and Admiral Darlan were obviously not of the intellectual stature of Blum and Daladier. When the accused were given the opportunity to address the Court, not only did they challenge the Prosecuting Attorney, but they attacked their accusers. They shook the whole structure of the charges. It became clear that if the responsibilities for the French defeat were to be weighed and shared, Pétain’s and Weygand’s responsibilities were greater than Daladier’s in the military field; the Fifth Column was guiltier than the democratic regime in the political field; big business and the pro-Fascist haute bourgeoisie were guiltier than the Popular Front in the economic field.

A new political atmosphere was created rapidly by the attitude of Blum and Daladier at Riom. This atmosphere was felt both inside and outside France. After June, 1940, the French government ceased to appeal to reason, justice, law, or humanity. Pétain had erased from the French political vocabulary the democratic motto: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. Taking the stand at Riom, Blum and Daladier used these words, and the world heard again the classic language of French democracy. In the statements of the accused—attacks against the Vichy government rather than defense of themselves—the echo of the French Revolution resounded. The true France appeared again; not the reactionary France, fettered to the credo of the *ancien régime*, whose spokesman was Marshal Pétain, but a generous country of toilers and thinkers, vintners and artisans, scientists and workers; the France of 1789, 1793, 1848, and of the Popular Front, her face turned toward the future, less mindful of her own wealth, comfort, or destiny than of the progress of mankind; France, the champion of liberty.

This true France, speaking through Blum and Daladier, told the Vichy government hard and unpleasant truths. She defied Hitler to destroy her spiritual independence and moral unity. She proclaimed her indomitable faith in the final defeat of Fascism, in the birth of a new and free Europe. Priority of ideal over interest, predominance of reason over force, equality of men before the law, fraternity of all races and nations—these were the precepts proclaimed at Riom and heard throughout the world. The Riom trial showed that the French spirit was not broken even when in chains.

The Vichy government was alarmed by this discovery, which was a counter-current to its “National Revolution.” Pétain realized, but too late, that the Riom trial was a blunder, an obstacle to his partnership in Hitler’s New Order. Would it not be better to postpone the trial or force its denouement? The Marshal hesitated. Hitler did not. The trial was to be stopped at once. “The

Vichy government does not realize its exact position,” said Hitler, and Pétain bowed before this sneer. Laval, a more faithful Fascist, replaced Darlan as head of the Vichy cabinet; the trial was adjourned indefinitely, and the accused were sent to Portalet. The tragicomedy of Riom was over, but the farce had lasted long enough to let Hitler, Pétain, and the world understand that the flame of the French Revolution was still burning.

Léon Blum and Édouard Daladier, the champions of French democracy at Riom, are now silenced and imprisoned. As freedom of press and speech has not existed in France since June, 1940, no one in the nation can protest their imprisonment or present their defense to the public; no one can uphold their charges against Marshal Pétain and the government of Vichy, political beneficiaries of the military defeat of France. It is my duty to continue the battle for them.

I, too, stand accused before the Court of Riom. I have been accorded a great honor by Marshal Pétain, his government, his Prosecuting Attorney, and his Council of Political Justice. They place me on the same level with Blum and Daladier. I stand with the scapegoats of the republican regime and the Popular Front—and I thank the Vichyites for it. I am prouder of this distinction than of the decorations I won on the battlefields of 1914-1918, because I believe that the spiritual frontiers of France must be defended even more strongly than her physical frontiers. I can now add a new title to the ones I have earned in a long fight against Hitlerism and Fascism, a fight which began long before June, 1940, and which has been the *raison d’être* of my life.

During my public life I committed mistakes. But I have never voluntarily been absent from a battle against Fascism. In French politics I fought, in turn, against the Royalists, the Croix de Feu, the Cagoulaards, the conservatives and the reactionaries of every stamp. I was a partisan and militant of the Popular Front and remained unswervingly faithful to its ideal. I saw in the Popular Front the legitimate heir of the French Revolution. I believed that only the alliance of all popular forces, Communists included, would bring about the birth of a new democratic France.

In the international field I opposed the Japanese government when it attacked Manchuria; Mussolini when he invaded Ethiopia; Franco when he betrayed the Spanish Republic; Hitler when he destroyed Czechoslovakia. I supported the League of Nations, collective security, the Franco-Soviet Pact. I was thus an unrepentant sinner, according to the canons of the Fascist church, and I largely deserved the wrath of the Vichy government.

Marshal Pétain was not the first to write my name on the black list and to make it a symbol of anti-Fascism. Hitler denounced me as one of his foremost adversaries in the speeches he delivered in September, 1938, the eve of the Munich Pact, for trying to transform Czechoslovakia into an air base for French and Russian bombers; Eduard Beneš, Joseph Stalin, and I were the authors of an international plot organized by the warmongering anti-Fascists against peaceful Nazi Germany. I shall return to the alleged plot later; but I might say now, that in the light of later events, I have often

regretted that the criminal intentions Hitler ascribed to us did not have a better basis in fact. If we had trampled out the nest of Nazi vipers, our crime would have spared the world untold tragedy.

Hitler's denunciation singled me out for attack by his French accomplices. A few days after Hitler's speech I met my friend Marx Dormoy, former Minister of the Interior in Blum's cabinet. Dormoy, who had denounced the notorious Cagoulard plot, said to me: "If Hitler ever becomes master of Europe, we shall have a Fascist government in France, with Marshal Pétain as its leader. The first three democrats to be arrested or assassinated will be Léon Blum, you, and myself." He was almost right. He was killed in September, 1941, while under the "protective arrest" of Marshal Pétain's police; his assassins have yet to be found or punished. Blum has been in prison for more than three years; and if I had been in France, I, too, would have been imprisoned or, more probably, assassinated.

It was to continue the fight that I remained abroad. I left France at the end of June, 1940. I was in England when the Vichy press and radio announced that I would be prosecuted before the Court of Political Justice with Blum, Daladier, Paul Reynaud, Georges Mandel, General Maurice Gamelin, and several others. Where did my duty lie? I consulted not only my French friends, but some important statesmen then in London who were familiar with my activities. All agreed that, if I returned to France, I would be recognizing Vichy's right to judge and condemn the French democratic leaders; in short, that I would be recognizing the legitimacy of the Vichy government.

In September, 1940, when I was charged, I had just arrived in the United States. Guy la Chambre, who succeeded me as Minister of Aviation in 1938, was accused at the same time, and decided to return to France. I respected his decision, whatever his motives, but I did not feel obligated to imitate him. I had another task to carry on.

I would have returned to France only if I could have ameliorated the physical or moral situation of the other defendants. No one can seriously contend that my return would have had any such effect. Blum and Daladier still would have been silent if I had been their fellow prisoner in Portalet, and I still would have been incapable of acting and speaking for them. Moreover, had I followed La Chambre, I should have had no opportunity to appear before the judges of Riom. I should not have been given the slightest chance to defend myself, much less to attack my accusers. The "punishment of my crimes"—i.e., my murder—had often been demanded by Charles Maurras, leader of l'Action Française, and by the Cagoulards. A few days before Pétain's request for an armistice, the German radio broadcast that I had been "executed by French aviators and patriots"; this news item, repeated at various times, constituted an appeal to potential assassins. The fate of Dormoy was in store for me—unless my enemies would have chosen a more discreet device and announced in the press that I had committed suicide.

These were the main motives for my decision: to avoid making things easy for my enemies; to defend my friends of the Popular Front and the ideal

of the French people; to expose what I know of the machinations that led France to defeat and Pétain to power; to continue my battle against Fascism.

I shall return to France when I can submit myself to judges deriving their powers from the French people.

This book is not intended to be an objective and complete analysis of the causes of the French defeat nor of the collapse of the republican regime. The time has not yet come for such a task, and the best scholars today lack both the perspective and the necessary documents to reach definitive conclusions. Military and diplomatic archives have yet to be published; the memoirs of contemporary statesmen have yet to be written. A man who would dare to judge and condemn under these circumstances would show a childish frivolity of mind or a criminal intellectual dishonesty.

The events of June, 1940, were the logical outcome of mistakes piled up during twenty years. These mistakes were committed in various ways and degrees by all political parties and social classes. Some did wrong; others let wrong be done. In addition, the events of June, 1940, grew out of international disorder which France was not alone in provoking: France paid for American isolationism, British conservatism, Anglo-Saxon red-baiting; she followed China, Ethiopia, Spain, and Czechoslovakia on the list of victims of "appeasement," a policy practiced not only in Paris, but in London and Washington, too. Only the historians of the future will be able to establish the hierarchy of French errors and of international blunders.

But I must give my opinion about the events I witnessed. I must take my part in the collective testimony. I was for many years a member of the French cabinet, a leader of the Popular Front, and for a longer time a member of the French Parliament. I knew Pétain, Weygand, Darlan, Laval, and their accomplices.

I will try to report truthfully and impartially what I saw, and, in the language of the French *Code d'Instruction Criminelle*, "speak without hate nor fear." I hope I can succeed. I must warn my readers that my opinion is provisional, capable of qualification or change; a witness cannot be a judge.

It is my conviction that six men—Léon Blum, Édouard Daladier, Guy la Chambre, Maurice Gamelin, Pierre Jacomet, and Pierre Cot—cannot be held solely or mainly responsible for the French defeat. No one can maintain that the complex problem of the fall of France can be summed up in the single case presented by the Vichy government to the Riom Court. Scapegoats, not criminals, were prosecuted at Riom.

I am not so naïve as to claim that we, the scapegoats of the defeat, were all blameless. We were not supermen, but fallible men. Winston Churchill once declared in a broadcast that he had committed three mistakes; Hitler replied, with heavy irony, that he, Hitler, had committed nine hundred and forty-seven. Hitler was right. One cannot act or govern without making numerous mistakes. The more one acts, the more mistakes one makes. A statesman's greatest fault is to refuse the risks of action through timidity or fear of responsibility and of error.

What matters is not the list of errors of detail, down to the slightest, that we, the men accused by the Vichy government, committed, but the appreciation of the ensemble, direction, and main line of our policy, and since our penal responsibility is questioned, the honesty of our intention. With respect to the latter, I can prove our blamelessness without difficulty. Not we, but our adversaries, repeated, "rather Hitler than Léon Blum"; not we, but our accusers, awaited Hitler's victory, to crush French political freedom and democracy; they, not we, came to power in the time of our country's catastrophe; they alone were the beneficiaries of the defeat.

I shall point out my faults and those of the other defendants, for I could not do otherwise without betraying what I consider the truth. I must repeat with Cicero: *amicus Plato, amica magis veritas*. Those who know me can testify that I never blindly followed all the policies of the government. Not always did I agree with Blum, and there were many issues in which I did not support Daladier, and more in which I did not support La Chambre. I should merely weaken the value of my testimony if I pretended that I approved of Blum's attitude during the Spanish war, of Daladier's at Munich, or of La Chambre's policy in the Air Ministry. French democrats have no need to be concerned; while I shall express my opinion freely, I shall in no way endanger my co-defendants.

The Riom trial was a paradox. If we were guilty—politically, not penally—it was for what we did not do and for acts that were not included in Vichy's accusation. It was not Blum's social and economic policies which hindered France's industrial development in 1936-1937, but the obstinacy of the industrialists and financiers who opposed the popular majority. It was not Daladier who prevented France from building a modern and well-equipped army with motorized divisions and a first-rate air force, but the members of the General Staff, who had been indoctrinated by Pétain and Weygand. It was not La Chambre nor I who imperiled France's aerial security, but the generals who did not believe in aviation and the diplomats who destroyed the spirit and substance of the Franco-Soviet Pact by handing Czechoslovakia to Germany. Blum had erred in yielding to the British government in the case of the Spanish Republic; Daladier, in not retiring a politically ambitious Marshal of eighty-three and in permitting Georges Bonnet to strike an accord with Neville Chamberlain; La Chambre, in dissolving the parachute battalions; and I, in not driving more Fascist generals and technicians out of French aviation.

I shall plead guilty—not to the things with which we have been charged, but to the error of leaving too much power and initiative in the hands of those who have accused us. I shall plead guilty for my friends and myself; I shall accuse our accusers, without hate, without passion, but without indulgence. We are not the only ones who must answer for our acts and errors before history and the French people. When the responsibilities of the various governmental groups in France are weighed, the men of the Popular Front will be able to hold their heads high before the men of Vichy.

Whether the Vichy government wanted to or not, it committed a far-reaching political act by initiating the Riom trial. This act will be its Nemesis,

as surely as the murder of the Duke of Enghien was Napoleon's and as the guilt for the Dreyfus case pursued the predecessors of Pétain and Weygand at the head of the French Army. The Vichy government made the laws which will be applied to its leaders by the French people. Only when its mistakes and ours are compared and weighed, will the true meaning of the Riom trial be revealed.

The Riom trial must be assigned its correct place in the politics of France. It was a moment in the unfinished battle between the forces of liberation and those of reaction, a battle which goes back to the French Revolution. Its historical interest, from this point of view, lies in the demonstration that the conflict between the *ancien régime* and the Revolution has not ended; the Vichy government is the actual expression of the *ancien régime*, and the Popular Front a modern version of the French Revolution.

The Riom trial went beyond France's history. It was also a moment in the world conflict between Fascism and liberty. Blum and Daladier stood not only against Pétain and his government, but also against Hitler and his disciples all over the world. Thanks to them, France is present in the ideological war in which civilization is at stake.

The reactions created by this double aspect of the trial—the struggle for and against the Revolution, the struggle for and against Fascism and imperialism—will determine the future of France and, therefore, of Europe. A study of the Riom trial may help us to a better appreciation of French democracy, to a more complete understanding of the dangers of Fascism, to a more accurate prevision of the destiny of our epoch.

PART I

ORIGINS AND DEVELOP-
MENT OF THE RIOM TRIAL

*“Against us, the bloody banner of
tyranny is raised. . . .”*

LA MARSEILLAISE

In organizing the Riom trial, the Vichy government wished to show the world that the Third Republic and the Popular Front bore the guilt for the defeat of the French Army. By adjourning the trial *sine die*, it admitted that it was incapable of proving this charge. Even in the eyes of Vichy's friends, the Riom trial was a blunder.

Why was this blunder committed? Marshal Pétain and his acolytes undoubtedly underestimated the caliber of their adversaries; they believed that their judicial machinery would have no difficulty in overwhelming Blum and Daladier, two men imprisoned for eighteen months and slandered daily by the official propaganda. They miscalculated. Blum and Daladier proved so much greater than their foe that they reduced to silence the hue and cry against them.

But a crude psychological error does not explain why Pétain decided, first, to try the republican regime through the leaders of the Popular Front, and then, after the trial had begun, to stop it. The causes of this contradiction must be sought in the origin and the development of the trial—the object of the first part of this book.

THE OFFICIAL CAUSE of the Riom trial was the defeat of France. The Supreme Court of Justice, organized by a law of July 30, 1940, was ordered, by the Vichy government to try those it considered "mainly responsible for the defeat."

A study of the causes of the defeat might at least have preceded the choice of "those mainly responsible for the defeat." In June, 1940, most Frenchmen thought not only that the war had been badly prepared and badly conducted, but that the country had been betrayed; true or false, these ideas should have been closely examined and thoroughly analyzed. The world was less surprised by the defeat of the French armies than by the circumstances of that defeat, its extent and suddenness, and by the consequences, notably the feeble resistance of French democracy and the establishment of a government prepared to collaborate with Hitler.

VICHY'S NEED TO DEFEND ITSELF

Vichy never tried to determine objectively the causes of the defeat. Without taking the time to conduct a preliminary investigation, the Vichy government proclaimed the exclusive responsibility of certain Popular Front ministers, to whom it added a few secondary figures. Having decided on an official doctrine, Pétain forbade its criticism, discussion, or opposition.

As neither the Constitution nor the Penal Code gave the government any right to try those whom it wanted to attack, a law was hastily drawn in July, 1940, not by Parliament but by Pétain. It established the Supreme Court of Justice to try "the ministers, former ministers, or their immediate subordinates . . . accused of having committed crimes in the exercise of their functions, or attendant on the exercise of their functions, or of having betrayed the duties of their offices." In less than two weeks, on August 13, 1940, the Supreme Court of Justice was prepared to function; its judges had been appointed, and the Prosecuting Attorney brought charges before the Court that "ministers, former ministers, or their civil or military subordinates . . . had betrayed the duties of their offices in the acts which contributed to the change from a state of peace to a state of war before September 4, 1939, and in

those acts which eventually aggravated the consequences of the situation thus created." A month later, the Prosecuting Attorney declared that he had discovered the authors of these infamous acts and demanded the indictment of Daladier, La Chambre, and myself, as well as of General Gamelin and Controller-General Jacomet. In October, 1940, Blum's name was put on the list of "those responsible for the war." At that time, in fact, it was for having "contributed to the change from a state of peace to a state of war," and for having "aggravated the consequences of the situation thus created" that we were indicted, which was strange in the case of Blum and myself, who had not been cabinet members since the beginning of 1938. To repair this error, it was later declared that we had "contributed to the change from a state of peace to a state of war" by neglecting preparations for the war in 1936 and 1937. At the same time and under other pretexts, the Vichy government indicted Georges Mandel and Paul Reynaud before the Supreme Court of Justice, while Jean Zay, Pierre Mendès-France, and Pierre Viennot, also former members of the Popular Front cabinet, were called before other courts.

These indictments reveal a great and clumsy haste. Had the Vichy government really been convinced of the responsibility of the Popular Front ministers in the war and the defeat, it would have gone to work less quickly. When we were indicted, in September and October, 1940, it was impossible for Vichy to have studied the causes of the war or of the defeat, or even the actions of the Popular Front ministers. This was because the government had abandoned Paris at the beginning of June, 1940. In the rush of a departure which resembled a flight, most of the ministerial archives had been gathered quickly, loaded on trucks, and scattered to the four corners of the country. Many documents were lost, and those remaining had not yet been collected and reclassified. How was it possible to study and evaluate the acts of the Popular Front ministers "committed in the exercise of their functions or attendant on the exercise of their functions," without government archives and administrative dossiers for the periods during which these ministers were in office?

The true causes of the Riom trial, therefore, had little to do with the causes of the defeat. A moment's reflection will show why a dummy trial of scapegoats was substituted for a serious trial of those responsible.

The Indispensable Scapegoats

The Vichy government was born of defeat. Its members were the political profiteers of defeat. Only defeat had allowed them to establish and maintain themselves in power, suppress civil liberties, and throw themselves headlong against the will of the people into the policy of collaboration. Had it not been for the defeat, Pierre Laval, already the most unpopular man in France, Weygand, a general conquered without fighting, Baudoin and Lehideux, representatives of big business and private interests, and other gentlemen of

little importance, could not have become members of a French cabinet in 1940.

Marshal Pétain's friends point to the fact that the French Parliament gave him a large mandate. But no one in France, not even Pétain himself, considers this mandate the basis of the power that he exercised after July, 1940. In a strong article written in 1940, Professor René Cassin, member of General Charles de Gaulle's National Committee, demonstrated the illegal character of the Vichy government. In its tragic meeting of July 10, 1940, the French Parliament had conferred an "irregular" mandate on Pétain. The act which conferred this mandate was engendered by fear: a third of the deputies, regularly elected in 1936, were absent. Some had been thrown into concentration camps and deprived of their rights because they were Communists; others had embarked aboard the *Massilia* for North Africa; still others were in German-occupied France. The senators and deputies who voted power to Marshal Pétain did so under the threat of seeing all France occupied by Hitler's troops. They were blackmailed in the most shameful way. Laval took charge of this task; a book written by one of his friends, Jean Montigny, gives abundant proof of the constant pressure Laval exercised on the President of the Republic and on Parliament on behalf of Pétain.*

Even if the French Parliament's mandate to Pétain were in order, it was only a limited mandate. Pétain was to be a kind of trustee, appointed to execute the will of the French people and to establish whatever new institutions the people might wish to create. He was to govern as a non-partisan arbitrator, in charge of preparing a constitution which the people would accept; this constitution was to be put in force and supervised (*appliqué*, in the text of the law) by new Assemblies, elected as quickly as possible; the Senate and Chamber were to continue their existence until the election of these new Assemblies. These texts were explicitly stated in the mandate: the people remained sovereign; Marshal Pétain was to be only a temporary administrator whose duties were to maintain order, to represent France to the world, and especially to let the French people heal their wounds and choose their new representatives freely.

Never was a public mandate violated more deliberately. Instead of being a faithful trustee of the French people, Marshal Pétain used his power to establish a dictatorial government, based not on popular sovereignty but on the *Führerprinzip*. "Authority no longer comes from below," he declared in a speech broadcast on August 12, 1941, "it is that which I entrust or which I delegate." Louis XIV was not more absolute. Ministers, civil servants, the military, all were obliged to swear an oath of fidelity to the person of Marshal Pétain. The constitution drafted by the Marshal, which made him absolute master of France, was never submitted to the people. He did not try to hide from the world that the French people as a whole disliked his regime and his policy. "The authority of my government is questioned," he said in the same address, "but in 1917 I put an end to mutiny; in 1940 I put an end to rout; today it is from yourselves that I want to save you."

* Jean Montigny, *Toute la Vérité* (Clermont-Ferrand: Éditions Montlouis, 1940).

And, as in 1917 Marshal Pétain had shot the mutineers, he now sent to concentration camps and handed over to the Gestapo those Frenchmen who refused to bow before him.

In so far as this authoritarian conception of power was in contradiction with the mandate that had been given to him by Parliament, Pétain became a mere usurper. He was in the position of a tenant who, having rented a house, behaves like an owner, selling or destroying that which does not belong to him. This point was made clear in August, 1942, by Édouard Herriot, President of the Chamber of Deputies, and Jules Jeanneney, President of the Senate, who jointly addressed a letter to Pétain, denouncing his abuse of power. This letter was published in the Anglo-Saxon and Soviet newspapers, but it did not receive proper attention. Because of their functions, Herriot and Jeanneney were acting on behalf of the French Parliament, from which Pétain claimed to hold his power. They demonstrated that France no longer had a legitimate government; they solemnly warned the world that the Vichy government no longer had the right to speak and act in the name of France.

This letter of Herriot and Jeanneney is an important document for the appreciation of the French political situation. Given the circumstances, it was a courageous thing to do.

Born of the defeat and dependent on it for the establishment of their dictatorship, the Vichy rulers had to find scapegoats in the summer of 1940 for that defeat. It was for them a matter of necessity. They feared that the French people would seek those guilty of the defeat among those who profited by it. To anticipate this, men and names had to be made the prey of public opinion.

What men and what names? That is what has to be examined.

"Preserve the Honor of the Army"

First of all, it was necessary to "preserve the honor of the Army." General Weygand thundered these words like a command. He used, unconsciously, the same terms that leaders of the French Army had invoked during the Dreyfus affair to prevent public opinion from discovering their criminal mistakes. "Preserve the honor of the Army," to French military men, is to secure by every means—including those outlawed by moral law and the Penal Code—the defense of the military corporation.

The question of the responsibility of military leaders in the military defeat of France either had to be evaded or posed in distorted terms. To "preserve the honor of the Army," the scapegoats of the defeat had to be chosen from the political personnel of the Third Republic.

In truth, at the end of June, 1940, the question of who was responsible was in everyone's mind. In the two weeks preceding the armistice, I was in touch with the crowd of refugees that slowly and painfully followed the roads southward. In the offices of the prefects, in the town halls, restaurants, and relief centers, I listened to many conversations, received many confidences, heard

many opinions. Opinions differed on governmental policy, but all agreed in denouncing the blunders of the French General Staff. The country was unanimous, not against Blum, Daladier, or me, nor even against Laval, Pierre-Étienne Flandin, Georges Bonnet, or Jacques Doriot, but against the generals who had been incapable of understanding the conditions of modern warfare and who were guilty of not knowing the rudiments of their profession. "Just as before 1914 they had prepared for the war of 1870," the people said, "before 1939 they prepared for the war of 1914."

The severest condemnation came from the soldiers. Lost on the roads in pursuit of dispersed divisions and phantom regiments, thrown together with the refugees whose uncertainties and anxieties they shared, the men in uniform cursed the conduct of their leaders. They repeated that they never had been schooled in the techniques of modern warfare, especially in the combined use of tanks and aviation, and they were amazed at the ineptness of their commanders in the battles of May and June. They asked why the Meuse and Seine bridges had not been blown up before the arrival of German motorized columns; why Paris had not been defended street by street, as the Spanish Republicans had defended Madrid (and as the Russians were to defend Stalingrad); and they wanted to know why more than half of the tanks and airplanes had been left in the rear—in Orléans, Toulouse, Lyon, North Africa—instead of being massed for a counterattack that might have changed everything. They knew that the depots were bursting with the cannon, airplanes, and equipment they had needed.

One began to hear quoted the disturbing remarks with which General Weygand had tried to persuade the cabinet to ask for an armistice: that he needed his tanks to master the revolutionary elements, if it should become necessary. That is to say, the Commander-in-Chief of the French Army preferred fighting French workers to throwing all his forces against the German troops. The soldiers praised the bravery of certain leaders—Giraud, Lestien, De Gaulle, Lucien, Delattre de Tassigny, and many others—but they declared that most of the officers had been the first to flee. "They left in automobiles and we left on foot," they said, talking about those officers, faithful followers of *l'Action Française*, *Je Suis Partout*, *Gringoire*, and other Fascist newspapers which had said in various forms, during the winter, that this was a democratic war and consequently did not interest them.

These statements circulated throughout the country, especially among the working classes and in petit bourgeois circles, which in France have always shown a quicker and sharper intelligence than other social groups. The criticisms of the General Staff were perhaps exaggerated, but confused as they were, they represented popular opinion. By June, 1940, not one man, unless he were directly involved, would have defended the General Staff. The most indulgent spoke of incompetence, the most severe of betrayal—and the latter were in the majority. Moreover, available information about war prisoners indicated that these unfortunates were still more bitter against their leaders than were their comrades in France. Their anger was legitimate. It was inex-

plicable, after all, that the General Staff, after deciding to abandon Paris and thus opening the east to the Germans, had not ordered the troops which occupied the Maginot Line to fall back toward the south. More than a million men, the best of the French Army, were caught in the German trap, a disaster which could have been prevented by an order from General Weygand. The most plausible explanation of this "error" occurring spontaneously to the prisoners of war, was that General Weygand, fearing the fury of his soldiers more than he did the enemy, and preferring the defeat of France to revolutionary outbreaks, allowed the youngest and most ardent men of the French Army to be locked up in German prisons rather than see them scattered through France. Thus France was covered by a great wave of anti-militarism, scorn for the stupidity of the General Staff, and deep resentment against certain leaders who were considered particularly suspect. Gagged by Marshal Pétain, and with only censored newspapers to read, France was not free to express any opinion; but the people were unanimous in thinking that the Army leaders had not been up to the level of their task. An impartial inquiry, not exempting the General Staff, would have been the normal outlet for public feeling.

Vichy neither could nor would order such a dangerous investigation. By its composition, the government of Vichy was representative not of the French people but of the General Staff. Its first cabinets were headed by Pétain, the spiritual leader of the French Army, the man who had played the most important part in the preparation of the war and in the formation of the General Staff. And these cabinets were composed largely of members of the General Staff—General Weygand, General Pujo, Admiral Darlan, General Huntzinger, General Bergeret, and Admiral Platon. As the French proverb says, "the wolves do not eat each other!"

Thus the first problem which faced the government of Vichy, confronted by the political and psychological consequences of the military defeat, was to divert to political men the ever-growing anger against the leaders of the Army. The French growled: "We have been betrayed or deceived by the generals"; proclamations and propaganda were to transform this into: "The generals were admirable, but you have been betrayed and deceived by your own representatives." Every device had to be employed to replace the reality of military responsibility by the legend of political responsibility.

"Save the Fifth Column"

But what political men should be chosen to bear the onus of the defeat?

Here again, the choice was determined by circumstances. On the one hand, the government wanted to destroy democracy and establish in France a Fascist political regime and a corporate economic system. Marshal Pétain's object in taking power (or, as he pompously said, making his country the gift of his person) had not been to permit the French nation to heal its wounds, come to itself, and determine freely its own political, economic, and

social institutions; his publicly avowed purpose was to overthrow the republican regime, suppress local and governmental civil liberties, "purify the French nation by punishing it," and bring France back to the social and religious disciplines of the *ancien régime*. To achieve this purpose, Marshal Pétain and his ministers were not satisfied with the support of the German government; they also needed the support of French enemies of democracy and of the Fascist organizations. On the other hand—and herein lay their difficulty—a spirit of animosity was growing in popular circles against these same anti-democratic and Fascist elements, based on a growing awareness that the Fifth Column had played a preponderant part in the disaster, a part as grave and sinister as that played by the incompetence of military leaders.

In June and July, 1940, most of the French people were less concerned with the public utterances of Marshal Pétain and his ministers than with the pro-Fascist and pro-Hitler tendencies of the supporters of the new government. Most of the ministers were unknown. The Marshal's backers included all the enemies of the Republic, all the men whom the French people had learned to distrust: Maurras, the doctrinaire of *l'Action Française*, who had incessantly praised Fascist regimes; Flandin, who had telegraphed congratulations to Hitler after the rape of Czechoslovakia in September, 1938; Marcel Déat, who, in August, 1939, had written the notorious article asking the French soldiers "not to die for Danzig"; Bonnet, who had destroyed the Franco-Soviet Pact by his negotiations with von Ribbentrop; Colonel Casimir François de La Rocque and Jacques Doriot, leaders of the two largest Fascist and anti-Semitic organizations; and Laval, who already symbolized "collaboration with the New Order," whose intrigues and negotiations with Mussolini and Franco were known, and whose intrigues and negotiations with Hitler were suspected. Moreover, the French people saw that every true patriot in public office refused to support Pétain and his government—not only Communists and Socialists, but also conservatives and liberals, such as Jeanneney, President of the Senate; Louis Marin, disciple of Poincaré and leader of the French conservatives; Champetier de Ribes, head of the Catholic group of the *Democrates Populaires*, and Herriot, whose talent and thought incarnated so brilliantly the patriotic tradition of the French Revolution.

To their astonishment the French people saw Pétain slowly fill the most important posts of authority in local, departmental, and central administrations with men who had taken part in the Cagouard plot, with those who had repeated the infamous refrain "rather Hitler than Léon Blum," and even with some of those who before or during the war had been arrested for treasonable domestic and foreign activities. The people were applying to the government the old proverb, "tell me who your friends are and I'll tell you who you are." They were alarmed to see Vichy employ for its most delicate missions Ferdinand de Brinon, Jean Montigny, Jean Goy, Jean Luchaire, and Gaston Henry-Haye—members of the *Comité France-Allemagne*, an organization which, before the war, had been inspired and financed by Otto Abetz, after 1940 Hitler's Ambassador in Paris. They learned with fury that on the night

assassinated. Zay was condemned, under pretext of desertion, to ten years in prison. Moutet was about to be arrested, when a friend warned him and he had time to flee. The indictment of Campinchi was difficult, since all his acts as Minister of the Navy bore the signature of Admiral Darlan, an important member of the Vichy government; Campinchi died at Marseille from an operation. Blum, Daladier, and I were accused of having betrayed the duties of our offices, and Marshal Pétain declared us responsible for the defeat of France.

If the reader reflects on these facts, if he consults the Fascist and pro-Fascist newspapers from February 6, 1934, to June 17, 1940, it will become obvious that the motive for accusing us was vengeance. Blum, Daladier, and I organized the Popular Front with the leaders of the Communist party. Without us, the Popular Front would not have existed, and without the Popular Front, the Republic would have been overthrown before 1940. If we were named scapegoats for a defeat in which Fascism played a decisive part, it was not because of the inadequacy of French military preparation during the rule of the Popular Front; it was because we defended democracy, denounced the criminal activities of the Fascist organizations, and created the Popular Front to oppose them more successfully.

My statement is easily proved. The Popular Front government was organized in June, 1936; on this date according to Marshal Pétain and the Prosecuting Attorney's list of charges at the Court of Riom, our so-called injurious activity to the interests of national defense began. But the hate of the Fascist organizations and the fury of the Fascist newspapers had been directed against us long before this time, and our arrest and sentence had been demanded from February 6, 1934 on. Why this particular date? Because on that date, a mob led and inspired by the Fascist organizations, particularly l'Action Française and the Croix de Feu, had tried to invade the Chamber of Deputies, form a provisional government, and overthrow the republican regime. Blum, Daladier, and I had organized the opposition to this Fascist coup. The 6th of February has become a historic date in the war between Fascism and democracy. Since then we have been the men most hated by the Fascist organizations and by the French disciples of Hitler and Mussolini. Long before the Popular Front government could have concerned itself with national defense, our fate was sealed, and Fascist newspapers thus early called for our trial by a political tribunal, even for our assassination.

"To the gallows with Léon Blum, Daladier, and Pierre Cot! Death to the assassins of February 6th! To the High Court with Léon Blum, Daladier, and Pierre Cot!" How often were those words spoken and printed between February, 1934, and June, 1936! According to *l'Action Française*, *Gringoire*, *Le Jour*, and other Fascist and reactionary papers, we were "assassins" and "executioners"; I was a "bloody scamp," Daladier a "killer," Blum a "hyena." Maurras, today Pétain's political adviser, ordered his partisans to "prepare their carving knives" for us. Fascist hatred had reached its climax before June, 1936, nor did the manner in which, after that date, we prepared the national

defense increase it. In fact, I received more threats and endured more attacks between 1934 and 1936 than between 1936 and 1940. Had Fascism triumphed in France before its power was broken by the Popular Front, Blum, Daladier, and I would have been tried or assassinated. We would not then have been blamed for failing to give the French Army necessary weapons; some other pretext would have been found.

As it was, however, Vichy had to bring us before its Supreme Court of Justice and demand our conviction. Its political philosophy and the exigencies of its partisans forced it either to organize a judicial parody or to have us assassinated.

To understand the imperative character of this obligation, the place held by the Vichy government on the French political chessboard in July, 1940, must be considered. Marshal Pétain had the confidence of Hitler and of the Fascist and reactionary groups. But the governmental team which surrounded him was, in the eyes of the authentic Fascists, a group of amateurs, not of professionals. General Weygand, Admiral Darlan, the civil servants, and the bankers around them, and Laval himself, had remained in the background during the political battles of 1934 and 1936. They were known to be hostile to democracy and partisans of an authoritarian regime, but during the growth of the Popular Front, they had encouraged the soldiers of the Fascist cause only as the old men of Troy had encouraged the soldiers of Priam, from high up on the wall. They did not have the political experience of a Doriot, a De la Rocque, or a Maurras, veterans of the anti-democratic struggle.

The old-guard Fascists had the impression that they were being used to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the generals, industrialists, and politicians who composed Marshal Pétain's government. The governmental team, therefore, had to make itself acceptable to the French Fascist leaders on whom it depended to organize the police and to recruit the guards for their concentration camps, the personnel for their youth camps. To obtain their co-operation, it was necessary to pay, and as it is easier in Fascist countries to persecute innocents than to carry out a program, Vichy ordered the Riom Court to condemn us. To establish authority over its partisans, the Vichy government had to throw Christians to the lions; consequently, it had to accuse them of having burned Rome.

The hate which the Fascists had sworn against the leaders of the Popular Front after February 6, 1934, as well as the fear of defeated generals—apprehensive of blame—was thus at the bottom of the Riom trial.

THE HATE OF THE FRENCH FASCISTS AND REACTIONARIES

I have often pondered the causes of this hate. I have tried to fathom the state of mind of the French Fascists, which, for a democrat, is as difficult to do

as it is for a civilized man to understand the state of mind of Hottentots. I have wondered why I became, with Daladier and Blum—and perhaps even more than they—their *bête noire*. I have tried to discover by what chain of circumstances I earned “either this excess of honor or this indignity.” If I now offer the result of my reflections, it is not to give a résumé of my political life; it is because a brief study of the role of hatred in contemporary French politics seems essential to an understanding of these politics. For such a study my “case,” as a French diagnostician or an Anglo-Saxon lawyer would say, is characteristic. I could take as well the cases of Blum or Daladier; but I shall reserve that analysis for the account of the Riom hearings. Moreover, in examining my own political career, introspection will, I believe, aid rather than hamper me.

Before proceeding, however, I must make two general observations. The first is a simple paraphrase of Clemenceau's biting quip: “The men of the Right are easy to recognize; they are not only stupid but the wickedest.” The violence of the Right appears throughout contemporary political history. The French are a civilized people, but we need only think for a moment of the past to understand that this civilization is the product of a long effort and conceals a latent violence—the horrors of the wars of religion, the excesses of the revolutionary period, the cruelties of the White Terror, the bloody punishment of the Communards by the Versailles generals in 1871. We know from experience that since the French Revolution hate has been the almost exclusive prerogative of the extreme Right—hate, and its sister, injustice. The French worker is naturally good; the peasant is naturally indifferent; but, on the whole, the French bourgeois is naturally egotistical and cruel. In 1871, when the Commune of Paris, which held its power from the majority of the people, was conquered by the army of Versailles, 100,000 workers fell; the workers' population of Paris was reduced by 30 per cent; 20,000 men, women, and children were executed without trial by the soldiers of Marshal MacMahon and General de Gallifet. It was the greatest slaughter in French history; the massacre of St. Bartholomew had claimed only 5,000 victims, and the French Revolution, during the Terror, fewer than 10,000.

“The men of the Right are wicked,” and, even under the Third Republic, their wickedness had opportunities to show itself. Not to speak of the Dreyfus case and the cloud of anti-Semitism which descended on France at that time, we may recall that Combes and Jaurès, before the last war, and Briand and Herriot, in the post-war period, were prey to the most disgusting attacks from the conservative and reactionary press. If we except certain German periodicals which helped prepare Hitler's advent, I can think of nothing more vile than the files of *l'Action Française* since the beginning of the twentieth century, or those of *Gringoire* in the last decade. Poincaré himself, yes, Poincaré, the conservative and nationalist, because he had committed the crime of being a republican, did not escape the foul slanders of Léon Daudet and Maurras. It has always been an honor in France, occasionally a sad honor, to be the opponent

of the nationalists and reactionaries. The best champions of democracy have known this honor, and some, like Jaurès and Salengro, have died for it.

My second observation is based on a phrase in one of Harold Laski's recent books: “The basis of Fascism is hate.”* Every time that Fascism or its related doctrines have developed in a country, political hatred has risen to fever pitch. I leave open the question whether Fascism is the cause rather than the effect of hate. The fact remains that Fascism makes use of hate and that hate alone creates the atmosphere essential to its growth. Fascism, as Laski points out, has always been directed or utilized by shameless adventurers with no scruples, and the substitution of instinct for reason in political thought and public opinion explains why Fascism engenders so much hate. No one has more successfully appealed to instinct than Hitler—national instinct, race instinct, corporative instinct, professional instinct; no one has so bitterly mocked the superiority of reason and the dignity of the individual. Fascism is a far less developed doctrine than democracy or Communism, both of which are based on reason. Fascism evokes primitive instincts, and the primitive man always gives personal forms to his feelings, symbols, and myths. The gods of primitive peoples are gods of flesh and blood, gods with beards, holding thunderbolts. Similarly, Fascist catechisms teach boundless admiration of the chief, devotion to his person, and hatred for his enemies. The Fascist, like the savage, must love and hate, whereas civilized men must think and understand. We must not be astonished to find so much hatred in the disciples of Doriot and the partisans of Pétain; if they did not hate their opponents so violently, they would not be such good Fascists.

During my political career I saw hate grow among Rightist political organizations. Why? Simply because my career developed from 1928 to 1940, the period when the conservative bourgeoisie was being corrupted by Fascist theories. When I entered Parliament, French reaction was still kin to liberalism; in 1940 it was Fascist. Yet in 1928 the men of the Right were already wicked men. At that time, to be sure, hate was cultivated systematically only by the partisans of *l'Action Française*. This was natural, since Maurras' doctrine, in Mussolini's own words, was one of the bases of Fascism. Not until February 6, 1934, were the cruelty and brutality so characteristic of Fascism grafted on to the natural “wickedness” of the Right. Colonel de la Rocque and the members of his *Croix de Feu* adopted Hitler's methods as best they could. They began to hunt republicans, Socialists, and Communists. It was impossible to hold a public meeting in a large city without running the risk of attacks, fights, stabbings, shootings, and, often, fatal brawls, provoked by organizations of the extreme Right.

I speak from personal experience, having been attacked several times. In 1935, at Aix-les-Bains, the hall in which I was speaking was raided by the Fascists, who wounded several people and threw an acid grenade at me in an attempt to blind me; I was hit in the ear, and have been slightly deaf ever

* Harold Laski, *Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (New York: Viking Press, 1943).

since. In February, 1936, Blum was attacked by Royalists during the funeral procession of Jacques Bainville, one of their leaders. He suffered a head injury and would have been killed, had it not been for the intervention of bricklayers working nearby. Shortly afterward, a democratic deputy, Elbel, was attacked and lost an eye. I could multiply these examples and quote the Fascist newspapers' calls to violence and murder. *Cui bono?* Finding a fertile soil in the traditions of the French Right, hate, as an epiphenomenon of Fascism, grew freely and rapidly.

It appears that the German soldiers were surprised to find so much brutality in the French disciples of Hitler who welcomed them in June, 1940. Let us hope that the French Fascists have not attained the degree of sadism, the enjoyment of cruelty, and the technical perfection in applying torture that characterize the agents of Heinrich Himmler. I want to believe, with all my heart, that even those Frenchmen whom the Fascist passion has led furthest astray will always be revolted by these degrading methods. But certain refugees who have escaped from concentration camps, certain Spaniards obliged by the Vichy government to work on the construction of the Dakar railroad, have stated that they were as severely treated by Vichy's jailers as by Hitler's. Whether it be German or French, Fascism always brings out the worst instincts of human nature; it rapidly demoralizes those who abandon themselves to its perversion.

The Case Against Me

In reviewing a career which attracted so much Fascist hatred, I will summon up my years of battle. Perhaps I shall not state the most important things, for a man is generally the poorest judge of matters relating to his own life, but I shall state what seem to be the most important. I shall speak of the things to which I dedicated my best energies, of the ideals which I upheld, and of the obstacles I encountered. I do not ask for approbation, but for understanding. I do not say, "I was right"; I say, "this is what I did."

For more than twenty-five years I have studied or practiced politics. I was thirty-two in 1928 when I was elected a member of the Chamber of Deputies, a post which I held until June, 1940, without interruption, re-elected regularly by strong majorities in Savoy. I did not enter public life unprepared. As Professor of Public Law and International Public Law, I had taught certain branches of political science, which I applied later as a member of Parliament and of the cabinet. After four years at the front in the first World War, I had finished my studies at the Universities of Grenoble and Paris, receiving the titles of Doctor of Laws and Doctor of Political and Economic Sciences; having completed certain research projects at the Thiers Foundation, I had been accepted at the *Concours d'Aggregation des Facultés de Droit et des Sciences Politiques*, which gave me the right to teach in a French University. I had been, in turn, professor at the University of Rennes and attorney at the Court of

Appeals in Paris. Then Poincaré, who had become interested in me (probably because I opposed him), asked me to work with him as a member of the Judicial Committee in the Foreign Affairs Department. Some years later I had the opportunity, as a specialist in Public Law, to take part in studies that dealt with certain administrative reforms undertaken by the Ministry of the Interior. Thus I was able, before entering Parliament, to observe the machinery of French administration.

It was, in part, through family tradition that I entered politics. My father and grandfather, who belonged to the *petite bourgeoisie* of Savoy, had fought for the Republic at a time when this required courage. In the language of their time, which has changed little in France, both were "Reds," which meant democrats, fighting against the "Whites," which meant royalists and reactionaries. Both had held various elective posts in Savoy. At the time of the Dreyfus affair, my father fought against clericalism; but he died in 1900, when I was only five years old, and my very pious mother gave me a Catholic education. Thus in my origin was that double tradition, the contradiction of which explains the political history of the French people.

When I entered Parliament, the democratic ideal of the French Revolution dominated my thought. I was elected deputy under the banner of the Radical-Socialist party, the democratic party whose chief inspirer was Herriot. Our ideas corresponded, in general, to those which the American New Deal was to present some years later. We were confirmed democrats, who saw the solution to post-war problems in a pacific extension of the democratic principle to social, political, and international problems. There was more idealism than realism in this desire. We underestimated the power of the reactionary forces in France and in the world. We did not realize how much the evolution of capitalism had already weakened democracy. We had read the works of Marx, but we had not understood them. There was a good deal of childishness in our political concepts.

What attracted me to Parliament was foreign rather than domestic policy. I had no taste for electoral committees or for party quarrels. The war had developed in me, as in many men of my generation, a profound horror of nationalism and militarism; we put our faith in the development of international institutions and the League of Nations. I had taken part in the activities of the Institute of International Law at the Hague and of the School of International Relations at Geneva, directed by Professor Alfred Zimmermann. With all the ardor of youth, I believed (as I do today) in the necessity and possibility of international collaboration. Those who have not lived through this period, who did not participate in the first efforts—I was going to say *babblings*—of the League of Nations, cannot understand the enthusiasm which at that time animated the young professors, students, and statesmen (Beneš and Titulescu were then less than forty years old!) who, after the first World War, tried to realize the great dream of the soldiers and peoples of all nations: peace and disarmament.

Such was my state of mind when I was first elected representative from

Savoy to the Chamber of Deputies. I soon became interested in the administrative side of public life. From 1928 to 1940 I was not only a member of the Chamber of Deputies, but also mayor of my little mountain village and *conseiller général* of Savoy. The exercise of these functions was my real school of political science, and I maintain that a man cannot govern a state if he has not previously been trained in the practice of local government. In Parliament my political activity was concentrated on international affairs.

In 1929 Aristide Briand named me a member of the French delegation to the League of Nations, a post in which I remained for four years. I was also a delegate to the Disarmament Conference. In 1932 I was appointed Under-secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the Paul-Boncour cabinet. In 1933 I became Minister of Aviation, and it was in that post that I witnessed the French Fascists' uprising of February 6, 1934. After February the 6th I participated in the democratic opposition to the Doumergue cabinet (in which Pétain was Minister of War), and later to the Flandin and Laval cabinets. It was during this time (1934-1936) that the Popular Front was conceived. After the elections of 1936 I became a member of the Popular Front cabinet and again took part in the government of France until the beginning of 1938; at that time I refused to enter the Daladier cabinet, of whose foreign and economic policy I disapproved. Thus, in the course of my political career, I was a member of seven different cabinets.

The hatred of the reactionaries, and later of the Fascists, was aroused against me by the accidental circumstances of my parliamentary and governmental career more than by the development of my political thought, which moved constantly toward the Left.

My political thought, as I have said, was founded on the principles of the French Revolution. I cannot describe or even summarize it here. I have always believed that the principles of the French Revolution were the best expression of the political genius of the French nation. I saw in that Revolution a period of grandeur and nobility such as France had never known before and has never known since. I thought the principles of the Revolution had to be developed and applied to the problems of modern life. I did not consider them fixed and lifeless formulae, but seeds cast into the hearts and brains of men, seeds whose growth must bring harvests, ever richer and more fruitful. I thought that economic and international democracy had to be added to political democracy. The more deeply I plumbed the heart of French politics, the more fully did I realize that there could be no political or international democracy without economic democracy. The richer my administrative and governmental experience became, the more I was convinced that universal suffrage alone was insufficient for the realization of the ideal of the French Revolution, that social equality must be the cornerstone of political liberty, and that the economic structure of society must be changed to build a true democracy.

For twelve years, in French and international public life, I fought for these ideas. In the course of this fight I encountered a resistance all the more strong,

since I not only opposed doctrines, but challenged powerful interests. I have seen the slow paralysis of the democratic state through the play of economic forces, or rather through the use made of economic power by those who controlled that power. If I look back over my own past, if I reflect on the most recent periods of the battle which the forces of progress and the forces of reaction have been fighting for centuries in France, I find so many reasons for the French Fascists and conservatives to hate me that I am hardly surprised to find their propaganda pursuing me even into exile. The heirs of those who urged the assassination of Jaurès, the admirers of the assassination of Matteoti, and the murderers of the Roselli brothers and of Marx Dormoy could not leave me in peace. I have disturbed them in the past and I continue to disturb them now. They know that in spite of their calumnies, popular elements in France do not consider me one of the men responsible for the French defeat, but merely a man who has fought on every front in the struggle against Fascism. I have united all reactionaries against me, because I did my best to unite all popular elements against them. To justify this general statement, I should like to show in what manner I deserve the fury of the French nationalists, the rancor of the large capitalist organizations, the rage of the European dictators, and, finally, the hatred of the Fascists who support the Vichy government.

Opposition to the French Nationalists

I aroused the anger of the French nationalists in the very first years of my political activity. In their eyes, my chief crimes were my desire to have France aid the German Weimar Republic, and my work to make the Disarmament Conference a success.

In 1928 I belonged to that group of Frenchmen who thought that the peace of the world was in a large measure dependent on the reconciliation of French and German democratic forces. This was Briand's program. The reconciliation was difficult; it encountered serious obstacles on both sides of the Rhine, chiefly those of nationalism. If the German nationalists, supported and financed by German heavy industry, thought only of revenge, the French nationalists, supported and financed by their own heavy industry, thought only of profit. The former wanted to destroy by violence the most legitimate clauses of the Versailles Treaty, while the latter tried to enforce its most absurd provisions.

The Versailles Treaty deserved neither the excessive criticism nor the dangerous fetishism which surrounded it. It was an imperfect work, therefore perfectible; it contained good and bad elements, based rather on economic and psychological ignorance than on viciousness or perversity. It was a mediocre treaty. By a loyal and progressive application of the League of Nations Pact, the treaty could have been amended and made to evolve toward the complete reconciliation of the former belligerents. To this end, however, precautions should have been taken against the imperialism of the Junkers and the nation-

alism of the Comité Français des Forges. To cite a few examples without going into details, it would have been necessary to put into operation the procedures of Article 16 of the League of Nations Pact (which foresaw collective sanctions against an aggressor), of Article 8 (which foresaw general and controlled disarmament), and of Article 19 (which foresaw the peaceful reconsideration of treaties that might become inapplicable, and of international situations endangering the peace of the world). Similarly, it would have been necessary to wipe the reparations slate clean, because the existence of that problem alone threatened the economic and financial equilibrium of Europe. All that would have been possible, had there been the will to do it.

A program of collaboration between French and German democrats, based on a reciprocal understanding of political and economic realities, was certainly more reasonable and more in the interest of France than the follies recommended by the French nationalists. But this would not only have wounded the nationalists' vanity, it would also have menaced their interests. Those whom the public called "cannon merchants" had no desire to see a policy of international collaboration and controlled limitation of national armaments replace a policy of huge war budgets and, therefore, of huge profits. Their interests coincided with those of the military class, which, in every country, desired the maintenance and development of permanent armies. What they wanted was not war, for they feared the revolutions which wars might engender, but the threat of war. A certain degree of international tension, supplied by Franco-German rivalry, was essential for their profits. I remember that Briand once said: "A battleship, to me and the common people, is a man-of-war, but I know persons to whom a battleship is one billion francs: three hundred millions in raw materials, three hundred millions in work, and three hundred millions in profits—and these last three hundred millions are worth defending."

Using the worst demagogical method, fear, the French nationalists sabotaged any rapprochement between France and the Weimar Republic, when such a rapprochement might have succeeded. At their instigation, France refused to give Chancellor Gustav Stresemann and Dr. Heinrich Brüning what she later gave Hitler. The partisans of reconciliation with the German democrats were dragged through the mud by those same men who were to become the agents of the Fifth Column and the partisans of collaboration. Because we demanded the fair application of the League of Nations Pact, including the article relating to the reconsideration of treaties, our patriotism was questioned. All the advocates of the League—Herriot, Paul-Boncour, Jouvenel, Blum, and especially Briand—were accused of jeopardizing the security of their country. If I was one of those more bitterly attacked, it was merely because, being younger, I took a more active part and gave my thought a more trenchant and less prudent expression.

My second crime, according to nationalist rules, was still greater. The attacks of the nationalists, militarists, and journalists inspired by the cannon merchants reached their culmination when I participated in the Disarmament

Conference as member of the French delegation, as Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and finally as Minister of Aviation. The work of the Conference was directed by Arthur Henderson, whose deputy was Philip Noel Baker, now a member of the Churchill cabinet. I proposed a project of aerial disarmament which implied the suppression of national air forces, the control of commercial airplanes (to avoid their being used as bombers), and the creation of an International Air Force under the control of the League of Nations. I believed, and I still believe, that this plan would render war impossible. The project met with the opposition of the French General Staff, and General Weygand, its chief, protested against my activities to Daladier, then Minister of War, who told him to keep his mind on war preparations and not to meddle with the country's foreign policy.

A few months later I created a scandal by proposing that the French delegation support a project submitted by the American delegation for the suppression of "offensive arms"; General Requin, our military expert (whom we shall meet again at the Riom trial), declared that there were no "offensive arms" and that, at any rate, heavy cannon and tanks were "defensive arms." I caused further scandal by supporting Litvinoff's definition of aggression. The hate of the General Staff and of the nationalists for me reached its climax in the spring of 1933. The only member of the French government present at Geneva, I thought it necessary to make Hitler unmask his batteries by suggesting a reasonable proposal in which the question of disarmament was bound to that of control. In a speech before the plenary meeting of the Conference, I asked that France and Germany agree to have short-term armies, organized on the model of the Swiss militia; such armies being truly democratic, their organization would have led to the disappearance of the military castes which have been a danger in Europe for so long.

I had, of course, obtained the approval of Daladier, President of the Council, and Paul-Boncour, Minister of Foreign Affairs, before making this proposition. My speech provoked the rage of the Hitlerian and Fascist press. As I was still young in French politics, I was surprised to note that the rage of the French nationalist papers far surpassed that of the German press. The most violent attacks appeared in the *Journal des Debats*, a paper controlled by the Comité des Forges, whose foreign policy was inspired by the notorious De Brinon, the friend of von Ribbentrop and Abetz, and *l'Echo de Paris*, a conservative paper representing the policy of the General Staff. Daladier informed me by telephone, the day after my speech, that General Weygand again had protested against my attitude, saying it "ran the risk of making possible an agreement on the question of disarmament."

To support the cause of general and controlled disarmament and the organization of an International Air Force, it was necessary to contend not only with German ability but the stupidity of the French military men. Within the French delegation itself, my influence was secretly opposed by certain military experts who preferred to follow the instructions of General Weygand rather than those of the government. Other experts, more aware of interna-

tional problems and less provincial in their outlook, believed in the necessity of settling the disarmament question. Among the latter was an officer of the Corps de Controle, Controller-General Jacomet, a specialist in financial and administrative problems, who contended that international control of armaments could be organized. He put forward an extremely ingenious project which the Subcommittee of Control had adopted. This adoption deprived the French General Staff of its best pretext for refusing to agree to armament reduction. Weygand has since nourished a profound hatred for Jacomet, whom he accused of "betraying the cause of the Army." Jacomet was brought before the Court of Riom in 1942, and I am convinced that Weygand's hatred was one of the principal reasons for his indictment. As the French proverb goes: "Vengeance is a dish that is eaten cold."

Thus, from 1933 on, through my activity in Parliament and at the League of Nations, I have succeeded in antagonizing Hitler and in attracting the fury not only of Weygand but of the cannon merchants and the French nationalists.

Opposition to the Capitalist Monopolies

The anger of the capitalist organizations was soon added to the fury of the nationalists. These organizations have played an increasingly important part in French public life during the last twenty years; they have subsidized all Fascist and pro-Fascist movements and they have inspired and paid for the campaigns directed against those statesmen who, faithful to the democratic doctrines, tried to realize the will of the people. Herriot, whose efforts in 1924 and 1925, to use his own words, "were smashed on the wall of silver," experienced, before Blum, the political power of French capitalism.

As in all preceding economic regimes, capitalism has had its advantages and its disadvantages; it has constituted an important stage in the history of humanity. But, like every other economic regime and every other institution, capitalism obeys the law of evolution. During the period 1920-1940 the evolution of capitalism—substituting great business combines for free competition and thus favoring the concentration of capital and the development of private monopolies and trusts—constituted, without doubt, a danger to democracy. To study the importance of this danger to French democracy, one need not resort to Marxist theories; it suffices to observe, without prejudice, the functioning of French governmental and administrative institutions. In the recent past the mechanism of these institutions became more and more impaired by the weight of great economic concentrations, which operated in three directions.

First, French economic life was dominated by a powerful financial oligarchy, at the top of which was the Bank of France. A beneficiary of privileges which went back to Napoleon, the Bank of France was the absolute master of public and private credit. The State was obliged to bow before its requirements to meet the needs of its Treasury, and the Bank of France, even more

than Parliament, had the power to make and break cabinets and ministers. Not only Herriot and Blum, but Clemenceau and Flandin had pointed out the Bank's abuse of power. Second, public opinion, basis of a democratic regime, was not expressed, because 90 per cent of the newspapers and radio stations were under the control of the capitalist organizations. These organizations were occasionally competitors, but they were always united, by virtue of a "gangsters' agreement," when there was a question of fighting the social or international policy of democratic governments. Before the official censorship of the Vichy government, the French press had known the unofficial censorship of the Havas Agency. Third, the mass of French workers—badly protected against the abuses of their employers until 1936—was threatened more and more by unemployment, while the mass of artisans, small producers, and small businessmen was rendered more and more powerless by the pressure of trusts and monopolies. These groups no longer enjoyed that minimum of social security and independence essential to the operation of democratic institutions. For all these reasons, obvious to anyone who knew French life before the war, the State and the individual, the two poles of democracy, were steadily losing their independence and their liberty.

If I had confined myself to a denunciation in general terms of the contradiction between French political democracy and French capitalism, if I had asked for State control over the economic life of the country, or even the transformation of the social regime, I would have found myself in the same situation as most Socialists and democrats; my ideas would have irritated rather than disturbed the capitalist profiteers who knew their own power. Their irritation became anxiety, then hate, when circumstances led me to apply the democratic doctrine. Within a few years I had occasion to commit two crimes in the eyes of the French capitalists: I had caused a few of their leaders to be imprisoned and I had suppressed certain of their sources of profit by the "nationalization" of the aeronautic industries. Let us examine these crimes.

It was partly chance which led me, from the very first months of my governmental career, to take a position against certain capitalist interests. In February, 1933, I succeeded the great mathematician Paul Painlevé as Minister of Aviation. Painlevé was very ill and died some months later. While he had been in office, he had decided to expose a scandal which was beginning to preoccupy political and aeronautic circles—the scandal of the Aéropostale, an aerial navigation company connecting South America and France. Thanks to the courage of its pilots—who included Mermoz and Saint-Exupéry—this company had written numerous glorious pages in the golden book of French aviation. That it had rendered France great services it would be unjust to deny. But the enterprise had fallen into the hands of a financial group which was more powerful than scrupulous. The directors of this group belonged to one of the most authentic of the "200 Families," the Bouilloux-Lafonts. Their power derived from their political connections as well as from their wealth and undeniable cleverness. One of the Bouilloux-Lafonts was Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies, and Aéropostale had as its lawyer Pierre-

Étienne Flandin, former Minister of Finance, future Premier, future admirer of Hitler, and future Minister in the Vichy government. The financial administration of the Aéropostale showed certain irregularities, which its directors hoped to cover up by using their political connections and their savoir-faire. They encountered an obstacle in the conscience of a civil servant of the Aviation Ministry, M. Emmanuel Chaumié, Director of Commercial Aviation, who has since died in an airplane accident. To get rid of this obstacle, the directors of the Aéropostale attempted to dishonor Chaumié by using a grossly fabricated forgery. Painlevé defended Chaumié, who was exonerated. When I became Minister of Aviation, one of the directors of the Aéropostale was liable to prosecution before the *Cour d'Assises* for forgery, and others to prosecution before the *Tribunal Correctionnel* for various misdemeanors committed in the administration of the enterprise.

I did no more than my duty. I felt no animosity toward the Bouilloux-Lafonts, but I refused all requests to let the affair be "fixed." A crime is a crime; the rich and powerful should be judged in the same way as the weak and poor; and justice, according to Chancellor d'Aguesseau, should be given "according to laws and not according to men." I visited Painlevé in the little sickroom where this great scholar was still carrying on his research on the eve of his death. "Those people are very powerful," he told me, "but it is necessary to put an end to their machinations." The hand of justice fell on the guilty; they were convicted and sentenced. The Aéropostale was liquidated.

The directors of the Aéropostale served their sentences; they have paid their debt to society, and no one now has the right to attack them. I have spoken of this case only because it belongs to contemporary political history. It was the first time in French parliamentary history that a young minister had brought into court people holding such high places in the triple hierarchy of money, society, and politics. This hierarchy has never forgiven me. For many of its members, the scandal consisted not in the commission of the crime, but in the prosecution of the criminals. By demanding the application of the regulations of the Code, I had violated the rules of the game, according to which a criminal of a certain class is not a real criminal. This was made very clear to me. Painlevé was right. Those people were powerful.

The Aéropostale affair obliged the administration to reconsider, in its entirety, the problem of commercial aviation. The major scandal of the Aéropostale had its counterpart in the minor scandals of certain other air lines. Beneficiaries of concessions and subsidies, these companies had organized a vast network of private monopolies which permitted them, without running any risks, to earn great profits to the detriment of the state. A law, passed several years before, which I had helped to draft as a member of the Aeronautic Commission, permitted the government to institute reforms. In spite of the resistance of private interests and the attacks of the press, this law gave me power to organize a national company, uniting all French air lines under state control. This was the Compagnie Air-France, whose establishment saved the state several tens of millions annually, and became the statement of a pri-

mary formula of "nationalization." The Compagnie Air-France was the first attempt in France to create a company jointly financed by private stockholders and the state; it was an imperfect experiment, but certainly superior to private monopoly. This formula has at present been outgrown by events; but in 1933 it constituted a political and economic innovation, and the big capitalist organizations understood what this threat meant to their interests.

At this point I should like to address some parenthetical remarks to the American public. American democrats have such deep affection for economic freedom that they generally oppose state intervention in the economic domain. I do not intend to discuss their point of view. I should simply like to point out that opposition to state intervention in the economic domain has always been less strong in Europe than in America for a very simple reason. American capitalism grew up under conditions different from European capitalism. Capitalism found in America liberty of space and possibilities of expansion which Europe lacked, so that, until very recently, American capitalism was still in its "pioneer" stages. European capitalism, however, grew up in small states with restricted frontiers, where monopolistic organization developed rapidly. We have had to choose between private monopoly with its abuses and public or state monopoly. In America it is possible to have several competing air lines because the clientele is large and the distances vast. The same situation would be impossible in France or Germany. Until now it has been possible, although difficult, to maintain the competitive system in America to a certain degree; in Europe it has become impossible.

I left the Ministry of Aviation in February, 1934. The capitalist organizations and big business were not sorry to see me go. In one year I had earned their hatred, first, by proposing to the League of Nations a project for the creation of an International Air Force and the suppression of national air forces, which had aroused the anger of the nationalists and of the cannon merchants; second, by having the courts convict certain influential members of one of the 200 Families; and third, by reforming commercial aviation through the substitution of a national company for private monopolies. During this year an Air Force, independent of the Army, had been organized. General Weygand had opposed this project, and on this count as well as on the others, the nationalist press set its dogs on me. The reader should by now begin to understand the "case" against me and to see why I reaped such a harvest of hate. In one year I had broken a record.

To explain more fully the anger of the great capitalist organizations, I must now turn to the "nationalizations" which the Ministry of Aviation practiced in 1936 and 1937.

In June, 1936, as a result of the general elections, a Popular Front government came into power in France. The Popular Front was the French version, *mutatis mutandis*, of the American New Deal; and the hostility of French capitalist circles to the Popular Front government can be gauged by recalling the hostility of American "big business" to leaders of the New Deal.

Nationalization of war industries played a part in the Popular Front

program. I had taken part in the formulation of this program and in the orientation of public opinion. Nationalization was prompted by the desires of the country. It had been demanded not only by the Popular Front, but also by most of the political parties and by the war veterans' organizations. It was accomplished by a law which Chamber and Senate voted almost unanimously. By nationalizing the aircraft factories, I simply executed the mandate given me by Parliament, the legal interpreter of the will of the people.

The Ministry of Aviation applied in its nationalizations new formulae, which were considered good and were used later to nationalize the railroads and to organize the *Compagnie du Rhône*.

Opposition to European Fascism

And yet all these violations of the canons of capitalism were evidently my minor sins. If I had committed no other crimes and remained quiet, I might perhaps have found grace, not in the eyes of Marshal Pétain and General Weygand, but in the eyes of Laval and Flandin, who have, over those military men, the advantage of intelligence over stupidity. What made my case a hanging matter was my fight against Fascism, in both domestic and foreign policy. I have always been, and I remain, an unrepentant anti-Fascist; that is why I have always figured on the death lists of *l'Action Française*, the *Croix de Feu*, and the *Cagoulauds*.

It was by taking part in the battle for collective security and the Franco-Soviet rapprochement that I opposed Hitler, Franco, and Mussolini.

The organization of collective security was the necessary extension of the League of Nations Pact. The League should not have limited its action to the organization of collective security; but it could not have been anything if it were not, first of all, a vast mutual-aid society, an association of nations binding themselves to respect and to apply international law. No society can exist without policemen, and the ancients were right to represent justice as a woman holding scales in one hand and a sword in the other. Just as force without justice is tyranny, so justice without force is utopia. "Force and justice must be joined," said Blaise Pascal. Full of these ideas, I asked, when Japan invaded Manchuria, that the French government take the initiative in bringing international sanctions against Japan by putting the French fleet at the disposal of China. André Tardieu, then Premier, laughed in my face.

After 1933 it was clear that Hitler's ambitions threatened the peace of Europe and of the world. Germany was well-equipped and heavily populated; therefore, if events required, it was necessary to be able to oppose her with the front of collective security. The establishment of this front depended on the participation of all peoples who did not accept the Fascist doctrine. Russia was in the front line of anti-Fascism. During the Disarmament Conference I had become friendly with Maxim Litvinoff, indefatigable champion of "indivisible peace"; had the democracies only listened to him, world peace would have been preserved. Invited to Russia by the Soviet government, I arrived in

Moscow in August, 1933, accompanied by a mission of military and technical experts, who were to study "the bases of a rapprochement between Soviet and French aviation." I was the first French minister to make an official trip to Soviet Russia, which followed an unofficial one that Herriot had just made. His visit had succeeded in dissipating certain Russian prejudices against the French Republic, prejudices that were only natural if one remembers France's aid, from 1918 to 1922, to all White Russian adventurers who fought against the young Soviets. Our aeronautic mission was greatly impressed by the industrial and military might of the Soviet Union. This was no superficial impression, for the mission included officers and engineers who could hardly be suspected of sympathizing with the Communist doctrines, such as General Barrès, Inspector-General of the Air Force, and M. H. Caquot, general director of aeronautic construction, member of the *Institut de France*.

To every honest man, it was apparent that the developing Soviet power was the only force that could be compared to the growing might of Hitler; to have Russia join the collective security movement was a decisive factor for peace. At the end of my trip the Soviet government asked me to transmit confidentially to the French government a proposition for the negotiation of a security pact. On our way to Paris we stopped at Prague, and Eduard Beneš, then Minister for Foreign Affairs of Czechoslovakia and the best political mind of the European democracies, greeted me with these words: "At last France has understood that the line of defense of her own security must pass through Moscow." The proposition of the Soviet government was the normal conclusion of my trip; the French government had obviously not sent one of its ministers and the highest authorities of the Air Force to Soviet Russia merely to give them an opportunity to eat caviar, drink vodka, and attend a magnificent ballet on the French Revolution. Hitler was right when he said that it was during the summer of 1933 that the first stones were laid for the Franco-Soviet Pact, which Louis Barthou was to negotiate in 1934, Pierre Laval to sign in 1935, the French Parliament to ratify in 1936, and Georges Bonnet to violate and wreck in 1938.

I laid the first stone, but Herriot remains the great champion and supporter of the Franco-Soviet Pact in France, as Litvinoff remains the initiator and father of the Pact. I was merely one of Herriot's co-workers in the daily political struggle to create a policy which alone was capable of offering solid resistance to Hitler. The purpose of this policy was not to "encircle" Germany, for neither Russia, France, nor Czechoslovakia ever intended to leap at the throat of the German people. The Pact was an instrument of peace; it threatened Germany only if Germany intended to threaten the peace of the world—that is, in the same way that the police, by their existence, threaten a bandit. I might also add that the French democrats who went to Russia were as impressed by the economic, social, and political achievements of that nation as by the spectacle of the Soviet armed force. No people, no regime, in the contemporary world has been able to realize an effort comparable to that of the Soviet Union. For my part, I have always believed that a synthesis

of the spirit of the French and of the Russian Revolutions can give Europe a formula capable of renewing its political ideology and rejuvenating its democracies.

The military capacity of the Soviet Union was at that time of particular interest to the French nation; that is why we tried to negotiate and ratify the Franco-Soviet Pact and then to perfect this Pact by a military alliance. Russia wanted this alliance, which had been envisaged in the first negotiations, but certain elements of the French government opposed it, pretending that it was essential not to irritate Hitler. In the second part of this book we shall have occasion to examine the steps taken in 1936 and 1937 toward the military development of the Franco-Soviet Pact; and I shall tell what political and military authorities opposed these efforts.

Let us return now to the facts we were examining. Czechoslovakia formed, from the aerial point of view, a bridge or landing-stage between France and Russia. A network of military agreements, between France and Czechoslovakia on the one hand, and between Czechoslovakia and Russia on the other, was a substitute for the Franco-Russian alliance, which France obstinately refused. In 1936 and 1937 I did all I could to reinforce this network. Military agreements bound France to Czechoslovakia, and some of these agreements bore my signature. Hitler was not entirely wrong in accusing me, on the eve of Munich, of wanting to place Czechoslovakian bases at the disposal of French and Russian planes; he merely forgot that the object of these agreements was not to make an attack on Germany possible, but to let France, Czechoslovakia, and Russia put into operation the mechanism of collective security in the framework foreseen by the League of Nations Pact. Any French Minister of Aviation, mindful of the security of his country and appreciating the need for defense against Hitlerism, would, I think, have practiced the same policy. Given Hitler's plans against Czechoslovakia and the Ukraine, it was natural for him to consider me a dangerous opponent and to unleash his propaganda against me. The French pro-Fascist and reactionary press began to denounce me as an "enemy of peace," the "agent or accomplice of Stalin and Beneš," a "warmonger," and a "firebrand." It was understood that I was all these things, and Hitler a peaceful lamb.

It was not only my governmental activity in favor of the Franco-Soviet rapprochement that aroused the European dictators; Mussolini and Franco, in their turn, had specific reasons to resent me.

After 1935 the mass of the French people understood that the aggressive policy of the Fascist dictators was a menace to France and to peace. They felt as one with the victims of these aggressions, and knew that after Ethiopia, Austria, Spain, and Czechoslovakia, France ran the danger of suffering under the yoke of Fascism. They were far more patriotic and farsighted than those rich bourgeois whose hatred for the Soviet Union and concern with their immediate interests made them side with Hitler, Franco, and Mussolini.

I was taking an ever greater part in the action of the French anti-Fascists. In 1935, after Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia, a committee was formed in

France for the defense of the Ethiopian people and the application of sanctions to Fascist Italy. This committee chose me as its president. At about the same time the various organizations which supported the cause of collective security decided to form a vast union of the pacifist forces, capable of mobilizing public opinion against the fomenters of international unrest. The "International Peace Campaign" came into being. Thanks to the activity of Louis Dolivet, today Executive Secretary of the Free World Association in New York and editor of the magazine of the same name, the I. P. C. became a great success; it soon included the Confédération Générale du Travail (which then mustered six million members), the Union Fédérale des Anciens Combattants (a war veterans' organization with a million and a half members), the associations for the League of Nations, all democratic organizations, etc. It extended beyond the frontiers of France. Groups of the I. P. C. were set up throughout Europe—except, of course, in the Fascist countries—in Soviet Russia, China, and India; the International Committee of the I. P. C. included the names of Mme. Chiang Kai-shek, Nehru of India, and J. M. Tchervnik, general secretary of the Russian trade-unions. I was elected co-president of the international organization with Lord Robert Cecil, whom I had met in Geneva at the League of Nations. We had participated together in many an international congress. From 1936 on I was closely associated with this man, one of the noblest figures in contemporary politics. There is nothing of which I am prouder than of the friendship which ties me to him. In 1937 he received the Nobel Peace Prize and never was a distinction more highly deserved. This great Englishman has given all his life, his activity, and his authority to the cause of peace among peoples and among men. Under his leadership the I. P. C. became the world's most active movement in favor of collective security. However, like the democracies, we were unable to prevent war, not because our principles were bad, but because in 1939 the forces of war were more powerful, although less numerous, than the forces of peace.

The Fascist dictators cannot forgive me for having been the defender and friend of the Spanish Republic. This was one of the charges brought against me by the Vichy government at the Court of Riom. When this activity is added to my activity at the head of the I. P. C. and to my work for Franco-Soviet rapprochement, it is obvious that I did my utmost to arouse the irritation of the European dictators and to deserve the hatred of the Fascists. There would have been no justice, in the Hitlerian sense of the term, if the Vichy government, when it inaugurated its policy of "collaboration with Hitler's New Order," had not declared me guilty of having "betrayed the duties of my office in the acts which determined the passing from a state of peace to a state of war." Either the responsibility for the European war falls on Hitler, or else it falls on the partisans of collective security and universal peace; and since there is no question of Vichy believing in the guilt of Hitler, I had to be included on the list of those responsible for the war.

Opposition to the Croix de Feu and the Cagoularde

Finally, I have deserved the hatred of the French Fascists on the same score as my friend Marx Dormoy, who was assassinated, and Roger Salengro, who was driven to suicide by an atrocious campaign of calumny. Even if I confine myself to the narrow field of French domestic policy, I cannot blame the Fascists for considering me their "public enemy number one."

Three events earned me this honor.

In the first place, I remain, for the French Fascists, one of the "assassins" of the 6th of February, 1934. On that day, the Fascists and pro-Fascist organizations, particularly l'Action Française, the Croix de Feu, and the Jeunesses Patriotes, had mobilized their troops and tried to invade the Chamber of Deputies. They used as a blind the notorious Stavisky affair—with which, incidentally, no member of the government then in power was accused of being involved. The immediate pretext was the government's dismissal of Jean Chiappe, Prefect of Police, who had at least equivocal relations with the swindler Stavisky. This displeased the Fascists, whose friend and protector Chiappe had been. The object of the demonstration, which quickly degenerated into a riot, was to force a cabinet which had the confidence of the Parliament, to resign and give way to a provisional government. This provisional government was to suppress democratic liberties in the name of "order" and to establish a so-called regime of authority. The Fascist uprising all but succeeded. The government's duty was to oppose this barefaced plan of replacing the power of Parliament by the power of the mob. The police tried to halt the attack of the demonstrators, and, to avoid being overwhelmed, had to resort to the use of arms. It took all necessary precautions not to spill blood uselessly; the mob comprised several hundreds of thousands, tightly packed; fewer than twenty were killed and about one hundred wounded. The nationalist press declared that the government had machine-gunned an unarmed crowd. A Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry, including members of extreme Rightist parties, established the baselessness of these accusations. But the Fascist organizations and the reactionary press tried to arouse public opinion against the "assassins of the 6th of February." Three names were denounced with particular violence: Daladier, President of the Council; Eugene Frot, Minister of the Interior; and Pierre Cot. Since then the Fascist organizations have pardoned Frot for having done his duty on the 6th of February as a reward for his support of Bonnet's policy of appeasement and of Vichy's policy of collaboration.

As Minister of Aviation, I obviously had nothing to do officially with the maintenance of order or the direction of the police. But I had already aroused the anger of the nationalists and the capitalists, and I was considered, rightly or wrongly, one of the die-hards of the cabinet; thus I was chosen—even then!—as a scapegoat. The charge was so fantastic that the Committee of Inquiry did not even ask me to appear as a witness. My part in the 6th of February had been limited to approving the government's action and rec-

ommending that the President of the Council and the Minister of the Interior use the means given them by law to put an end to the inflammatory campaigns of the monarchist and Fascist press. I had pointed out that the proclamation of a state of siege would permit the seizure of newspapers and the re-establishment of peace and order. My advice was not followed, and, on February 7th, the Daladier cabinet resigned. The Fascists had not overthrown the government, but they had nevertheless made their point, since the cabinet formed by Gaston Doumergue included men such as Laval, Flandin, Marquet (who was also to become one of Pétain's ministers), and Pétain himself. The Doumergue cabinet in 1934 was a preface to the Pétain government of 1940, and left the way open for the agitations of the Croix de Feu, at that time the largest of the Fascist groups. The chief, Colonel de la Rocque, together with the "victims" of February 6th swore to revenge themselves on Daladier, the other "assassins," and me.

In the second place, the French Fascists consider me one of the leaders of the Popular Front. The Popular Front was the spontaneous reaction of the French masses against Fascist agitation, the riposte to the "mobilizations" ordered by Colonel de la Rocque. By making me a symbol of the 6th of February, the Fascists destined me to become a symbol of the Popular Front. Convinced of the Fascist danger, I had been one of the first democrats to recommend the union of all anti-Fascist elements. I took part in the activities of the Popular Front, as did all the democratic and Socialist deputies of the same political generation: Zay (convicted and imprisoned by the Vichy government), Mendès-France (convicted and imprisoned), Dormoy (assassinated), Salengro (driven to suicide), Viennot (convicted and imprisoned by the Vichy government), Pierre Bloch (arrested and imprisoned by the German authorities), and many others, not to speak of the innumerable militant syndicalist and Communist workers on whom the hand of Vichy also has fallen.

In the third place, the French Fascists hold me partly responsible for the proceedings brought against the Cagoularde, whose plot against the state had been uncovered by the French police in 1937. The Cagoularde had borrowed their methods from Nazi terrorists and their costume from the Ku Klux Klan. They had formed a Secret Anti-Revolutionary Committee (C. S. A. R.), which received arms from Germany and from Italy; they perpetrated outrages (the bombing of the Quartier de l'Étoile) and murders (the assassination of the Roselli brothers), as a result of which their activities were in part discovered. I had to concern myself with the Cagoularde, because their propaganda had penetrated into aeronautic circles. One of the chief Cagoularde was General Dusseigneur of the Air Force. The judicial authorities decided to arrest and imprison him. I was asked—sometimes threateningly—to obtain the release of that general, whose imprisonment apparently wounded the honor of the Army. I replied that if an honor had been wounded it was not the Army's but only that of General Dusseigneur, who had participated in a plot against a state whose servant he was. Just as I decided to let justice take its course in the Bouilloux-Lafont affair in 1933, so I decided to let it take its course in

the Dusseigneur affair in 1937. Many anonymous letters informed me of the impending vengeance by the heads of the Cagoule. I cannot blame the French Fascists for keeping their word, nor can I be surprised at seeing Vichy execute that vengeance.

My Position in the Popular Front

Such is the résumé of my political life. I want to make it clear that I have not told the story of my career out of vanity. If I state that I was a figure symbolic of the fight against Fascism, it is not because I demand rewards for my activities. I do not want to imitate those refugees and emigrés who claim to have seen, understood, and prophesied everything. Having been a minister only seven times, and a member of Parliament only twelve years, I leave it to those who belonged neither to Parliament nor to a cabinet to explain to the State Department and to the Foreign Office the secrets of French politics, the importance of the missions with which they were supposedly entrusted, and the confidences which they received. I leave it to those civilians or generals who never knew the peasants and workers of France to speak in their name. So much the worse for those who listen to these empty barrels! Personally, I was only a man, at grips with the difficulties of thought and action—a man with his pettiness, weaknesses, and errors, a man no different from others.

Circumstances have played a great part in my life. They have largely determined the general line of my development, and I owe more to them than to myself. Events rather than studies have shaped me. Anyone with my intellectual discipline, confronted with the same problems, would have had the same reactions as I; and the way in which I dominated or was dominated by these reactions has been chiefly a matter of temperament. My life has been simple, if not calm. When I was only twenty, war had already taught me to hate nationalism and militarism; these lessons, together with my training in political science, made me an active supporter of the League of Nations. The Aéropostale affair and my first governmental experiences, added to my studies of public law, brought home to me the contradiction between political democracy and capitalism. Economic and demographic statistics of France and Germany taught me that the front of collective security with the Soviet Union was the only effective obstacle with which Europe and the world could oppose the dangers of Hitlerism. The attitude of the Fascists and nationalists after February 6, 1934, showed me that in France "the men of the Right are wicked men" indeed; and the political history of my country proved to me that in 1936, as in 1848 during the MacMahon regime, and from 1894 to 1906 during the Dreyfus affair, it was necessary to unite the forces of the revolutionary workers with those of the liberals and democrats to check the activities of these "wicked men." These truths, evident to me from the beginning, became ever stronger and clearer; they brought me to the front line of the war

against Fascism and Hitlerism. If I were asked how I became Vichy's "enemy number one," I might answer, with some irony, that it happened all by itself!

The preceding pages are not a plea but an explanation. I do not say that I was right to have a certain attitude, but rather that given this attitude, it was natural that I should figure on Hitler's and Pétain's death list of enemies.

I add that while I regret my errors, I regret none of the acts which won me the anger of the nationalists, reactionaries, Fascists, and Cagouards. Like many others, I could have chosen the easy way; but I grew up in the mountains, where one often has to take the steepest path to avoid the avalanche. I am only sorry not to have fought the enemies of French democracy more bitterly. I do not regret sending airplanes and arms to the Spanish republicans; I only wish I had sent more. I do not regret my policy toward the Soviets; I only wish I could have carried it to a successful conclusion. I say, with Cornaille, "if I had it to do over, I would do it again." As I do not regret my anti-Fascist activity, I cannot regret its consequences. I prefer to be a political refugee, carrying on in exile the fight against Fascism, rather than a dishonored partisan of the policy of collaboration inaugurated by Pétain and carried on by Laval.

A French proverb says that one has the friends one deserves; if it is equally true of one's enemies, I am proud of mine.

The Case Against Gamelin, Jacomet, and La Chambre

These reasons explain the charges against the men of the Popular Front. They do not at first glance explain the charges against General Gamelin, Controller-General Jacomet, and La Chambre, who was my successor in the Air Ministry.

These men must be considered minor figures; they were accessory defendants, whose indictment was a necessary prelude to the indictment of the three men of the Popular Front: Blum, Daladier, and myself.

It was impossible to avoid bringing General Gamelin before the Court of Riom, for it was he who had been officially in charge of the preparation of the Army after 1936 and who was responsible for the direction of military operations until the beginning of June, 1940. General Weygand, Chief of the French General Staff at the time of the defeat, gave the excuse that he had found a difficult and even desperate situation. "They called me too late," he said; "three months sooner I could have organized the defense of France." It was necessary to convict Gamelin to preserve the military prestige of Weygand and to explain why Weygand had been so easily conquered and why he had recommended the armistice as early as June 12, 1940. Moreover, not to try Gamelin, Chief of Staff of the French Army after February, 1936, would have meant making the situation easy for Daladier, Minister of National Defense after 1936. Daladier would merely have had to point out that all the acts in the preparation of the war for which he was blamed bore the signature of

Gamelin, had been executed by Gamelin, and involved Gamelin's responsibility far more than his own. Even in a Fascist country the ridiculous has its limits. Finally, even if General Gamelin had been a weak man at the head of the French armies, he had been loyal; he had refused to associate himself with the Fascists and the Cagoulauds; he had been an avowed partisan of agreements with Soviet Russia; in September, 1938, he had drawn up a report showing the strength and weakness of the French military situation and concluding that Czechoslovakia could and should be defended. Hence, Vichy, eager to please Hitler, had good reason to resent the honest Gamelin.

After the first hearings at Riom, General Gamelin declared that "to keep the honor of the Army intact" he would not answer any of the judges' questions. This declaration was generally interpreted as indicating Gamelin's adhesion to Vichy's official doctrine of mandatory reticence concerning the responsibility of the military men in order to bring out more forcefully the responsibility of the political men—a policy which was imposed on the French press. Perhaps General Gamelin merely wanted to reserve for his future memoirs the revelations which would display the stupidities or treasonable activities of the Marshal and those generals who accused him. Perhaps he feared to irritate Pétain by drawing him into the trial. The indictment of General Gamelin involved vengeance, the vengeance of Fascists against a loyal man, and of Hitler's friends against the partisans of the entente with Russia; it involved the necessity of trying the Chief of Staff in order to try the Minister of National Defense; and it involved the compliance of all the military men with Pétain's order of silence so that "the honor of the Army"—the honor of Pétain, Weygand, Corab, and other Fascist generals—might be preserved.

The case of Controller-General Jacomet was more complicated and revealed a greater degree of Machiavellism. Few persons understood his indictment. As General Secretary of the War Department, Jacomet had been in charge of purely administrative problems. He had merely executed the decisions of his chiefs. The Council of Political Justice, which prepared the decision that Marshal Pétain handed down on October 16, 1941, against "those mainly responsible for the defeat," declared that Jacomet "did not appear as one of the men principally responsible . . . and that there was no way to apply to him Constitutional Act No. 7"—in other words, there was no way to punish him. One must therefore know the in and outs of French administration to understand why Jacomet was imprisoned. His indictment before the Court of Riom had two explanations. First, Vichy wanted to eliminate a witness who would have been dangerous for the prosecution and valuable to the defense. Having been in control of war manufactures, Jacomet easily could have demolished Vichy's thesis by showing that all the deficiencies with which Blum, Daladier, La Chambre, and I were charged were actually caused by the hesitations and incomprehensions of the General Staff and the Supreme War Council, of which Pétain was the most influential member. Jacomet could have proved without difficulty that if the French Army lacked tanks, air-

planes, anti-aircraft guns, it was because the Supreme War Council had not done its work and had not, at the proper time, asked for the kind of armament which the development of the German Army had made necessary. According to French procedure and contrary to American and English law, a defendant cannot be heard under oath; he cannot be a witness. By indicting Jacomet, Vichy deprived Daladier of his best witness. The Vichy government violated the Penal Code, but it knew the *Code d'Instruction Criminelle* well enough.

The second reason for Jacomet's indictment was the vengeance of the military in general and of Weygand in particular. I have already indicated the role Jacomet played at the Disarmament Conference in 1932 and 1933. Weygand never forgave him for having tried to make the control of armaments possible; in Weygand's eyes, even to take the Disarmament Conference seriously was lese majesty against the Army.

Finally, to reach me, Vichy had to try La Chambre, who was not a Minister of the Popular Front, nor even a supporter of the Popular Front. He was a young liberal bourgeois, heir to an immense fortune and brought up in great luxury. In 1928 he had been elected member of Parliament for Ille et Vilaine. He became friendly with Daladier, who appointed him Minister of Aviation in 1938 after the fall of the Popular Front. Before this time he had opposed both the Communists and the Socialists. As Minister of Aviation, he fought the policy of the Popular Front; he opposed the support of the Spanish Republic and the Franco-Soviet rapprochement, and was a partisan of Bonnet's appeasement policy. Moreover, having left France in July, 1940, for the United States, he hastened to make statements to the press in favor of Pétain, who repaid him by accusing him of having "betrayed the duties of his office." It was therefore surprising to see La Chambre accused in a trial so obviously directed against the Popular Front leaders.

Vichy could not accuse me without accusing La Chambre, for its thesis was that the inadequacy of French aerial armament was the result of bad policy practiced since June, 1936. Between June, 1936, and June, 1940, I was Minister of Aviation for less than nineteen months, whereas La Chambre had held that office for almost two and a half years. Moreover, I left the Ministry of Aviation in January, 1938, two and a half years before the defeat. Since the average life of a combat plane is three years in peacetime and only a few months in wartime, even by forcing matters to an extreme, it would have been difficult to hold me solely responsible for the situation. Vichy at least had to pretend to associate my successor with my mistakes.

La Chambre committed no graver mistake than to believe in Pétain. A real farce was enacted to persuade him to leave the United States and return to France: if he consented to throw all the blame on me he was promised liberty and the return of his confiscated property. Once he had been imprisoned, all those promises were forgotten, to avoid political difficulties. (All this in spite of the declaration in October, 1941, by Pétain's Council of Political Justice affirming "there was no basis for detaining administratively Guy la Chambre"!.) In 1942 the Supreme Court of Justice ordered his "pro-

visory release," but Marshal Pétain refused to have the court order executed. Seriously ill and regretful, La Chambre is dying slowly in the prison of Bourrassol. With no other reason than hatred for my policy and for the Popular Front, Pétain has thrown one of his own partisans into prison—an innocent man at that. The ways of the Fascists are not attractive.

The Necessary Vengeance of French Fascism

Thus the Vichy government had reasons for bringing all of us before the Court of Riom—reasons which had nothing to do with the war or the defeat. Under a dictatorial and Fascist regime, such reasons are sufficient excuse to accuse and convict political enemies. "He who wants to drown his dog accuses him of being mad." The Riom trial took place not in a free country under the rule of law, but in a Fascist state, subject to the caprices of an eighty-six-year-old soldier, the servant of Hitler. For such a trial to have truth as its objective would be a disconcerting paradox; the object of Fascist political trials is always vengeance, never justice.

It can happen, although rarely, that vengeance may coincide with the demands of justice. The fact that Blum, Daladier, and I have been leaders of the Popular Front and enemies of Fascism explains our accusation, but it obviously does not mean that we are not guilty for the war and the defeat. The preceding pages have shown that appearances are against the Vichy government, but appearances are not enough. The Riom trial was the trial of the scapegoats, but it might at the same time have been the trial of the guilty. A broad examination of the causes of the French defeat will show that this was not so. The problem was not even touched by the Court of Riom. The trial of those responsible for the defeat is still to be held.

The French Defeat

2

NAZI GERMANY was a totalitarian state of eighty millions; France a capitalist democracy of forty millions. Experience has shown not only in France, but also in England and America, that democratic capitalist regimes are not as well-equipped to prepare and wage total war as the totalitarian states. This general observation does not admit a general conclusion that National Socialism is superior to capitalist democracy, for the value of a political and economic system cannot be measured in terms of its capacity to wage war. Genghis Khan was the greatest conqueror and ablest soldier of his era, yet his victories contributed little to the advancement of humanity.

Before a list of the guilty can be drawn, numerous preliminary studies must be made; and these studies presuppose the publication of diplomatic and military archives relating to the preparation and the execution of the war. From available material, however, we do know that the problem of the causes of the defeat, when the details are studied, is singularly complicated. We do know that the causes of the defeat were many, because the causes of the weakness of France in 1939 and 1940 were many. Some of these causes were inevitable. No statesman, had he Napoleon's genius and Louis XIV's absolute power, could have transformed an agricultural country of forty million inhabitants into an industrial country of eighty million inhabitants. Other elements could have been altered, but the causes resulted from a long series of mistakes for which all the democracies and not France alone must be blamed. In France avoidable mistakes were aggravated not by the action of a single political party, but by all the parties that were successively in power.

Finally, we must add treason to the inevitable and avoidable causes of French weakness. This treason cannot be fully exposed so long as Hitler dominates Europe and controls the Vichy government.

Complete and definitive explanations for the French defeat cannot be attempted at present. It is possible, however, to show the complexity of the problem, which must be approached with the prudence and moderation which were absent in Vichy's action. I would not presume to say: "Here is the truth." I propose only to clarify the known facts, to present certain aspects of the problem, to formulate hypotheses, and to offer my own interpretation of what occurred. Because of my intimate association with the events, I do not ask the reader to accept my interpretation without reflection and criticism. I do not